



COURTESY PHOTO

Special nights for kids are a regular thing in the clubhouse at Maple Ridge, where movie nights, talent shows and teens-only dance classes are fun for new and old friends alike.

## It's great to be a kid in Ave Maria

BY Nanci Theoret

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

It's the cringe-worthy, often whiny proclamation parents dread hearing their children utter: "There's nothing to dooooo," usually accompanied by a dramatic sigh for effect.

At Ave Maria — replete with fun-filled summer camps, sports leagues, dance and swim classes, a water park and year-round activities and events for tots to teen — that nails-on-the-chalkboard refrain is seldom heard. If anything, it's never a case of nothing to do but what to do next and how to fit it all in. Here, even reading lessons with a tutor include gleaming pennies and a happy dance.

As the lifestyle director for the Ave Maria Master Association (AMMA), Carol DiFlorio's job is akin to that of cruise ship director: balancing the interests of a growing multigenerational town by providing engaging activities, entertainment and events for all ages.

Children's programs are often alfresco, convened in the town's parks, playgrounds and recreational facilities or at the Ave Maria Water Park, a destination beloved by kids and parents alike. Businesses, neighborhood associations and resident-founded clubs and sports throughout Ave Maria have also made it their mission to keep kids engaged, active and creative (extra credit for anything educational requiring thinking and problem solving, like three weeks of summer science camps and community days with firefighters and sheriff deputies to teach stranger danger and bicycle helmet and fire safety).

Spring and fall festivals are the heart of Ave Maria's kid-centric lifestyle. Such events feature face-painting, games, inflatable obstacle courses, food and child-friendly vendors

SEE KIDS, A24 ►

## AVE MARIA MOMS *mean* BUSINESS



BY Erica Fish

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

**T**he welcome bell chimes and a smiling face greets you with a warm hello. This is the typical reception for customers, patients and clients at any of Ave Maria's many businesses. At the women-owned establishments, however, an extra touch comes into play, bringing out the hospitable, small-town vibe in the bustling setting of a growing community.

Ave Maria is a town saturated by entrepreneurs, with a great number being owned and operated by women who are also raising young families. Being their own boss, paying their own salary, defining how they want to work and balancing their career with the rest of their life's demands is no easy feat; so, what's the common thread? Read on as several Ave moms share the secrets of their success.

SEE MOMS, A22 ►



COURTESY PHOTOS

TOP: Katie Stella, the owner of Stella Rose Way boutique, with her daughter, Lily. ABOVE: Patricia Stocton, left, loves making customers of all ages smile with frosty treats from Meltz.

### Meet a Townmaker

Fire chief boasts "greatest job on the planet." A7 ►



### He's come full circle

First a teacher, now the principal at Donahue Academy. A20 ►



### Fun around the town

Smiling faces abound at local events. A6, A8, A27 ►





# Door-to-Door tour showcases more than two dozen model homes

**BY Nanci Theoret**

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Builders are rolling out the red carpet and the “Welcome Home” mat at more than 25 designer-furnished model homes during Ave Maria’s Door-to-Door Model Home Tour going on now. The models provide a glimpse inside the friendly lifestyle and large selection of single-family homes, villas, carriage homes and condominiums in Ave Maria.

There are gifts for those who visit the Ave Maria New Home & Welcome Center and three neighborhood sales offices in June.

“Door-to-Door showcases our talented team of premier builders and the nearly limitless homebuying options available to future residents of Ave Maria,” says Michelle Mambuca, marketing and public relations manager for Ave Maria. “We’re encouraging visitors to plan a fun-filled day in our town, see the latest in interior design and new-home construction and explore our many other open doors — the locally owned restaurants and shops in Town Center for lunch, happy hour, dinner and unique merchandise.”

Door-to-Door guests receive a gift simply by picking up a community map at the New Home & Welcome Center and then visiting any three of the town’s four neighborhoods: Maple Ridge by CC Homes, Del Webb Naples, The National Golf & Country Club by Lennar and Avalon Park offered by Pulte Homes. Guests unlock doors by earning stamps at the sales offices and claiming their gift at the New Home and Welcome Center.

Builders are offering limited-time savings on Ave Maria homes during Door-to-Door as well as quick-move-in homebuying opportu-



COURTESY PHOTO

**The Stardom is in Del Webb Naples, a 55-and-older community by Del Webb.**

nities for those who can’t wait to enjoy Collier County’s Big Kind of Small Town. Many homes are available for immediate move-in and in the coming months.

Revered for its neighborly small-town vibe, safety, amenities and outdoor recreation, Ave Maria was named No. 18 of the nation’s 50 best-selling master-planned communities in 2022 by distinguished real estate consulting firms RCLCO and John Burns. With more than 4,000 home sales since its inception — 187 of them sold during the first quarter of 2023 — Ave Maria is also on pace for another banner year.

## Won’t you be our neighbor?

Door-to-Door showcases beautiful model homes in picturesque neighborhoods nestled along lakes, championship golf courses and preserves, with pricing from the \$200,000s to \$800,000s.

In Avalon Park, visitors can tour three professionally decorated models showcasing Pulte Homes’ selection of one- and two-story single-family homes and the versatility of its floor plans. The models show flex rooms as

SEE TOUR, A4 ►

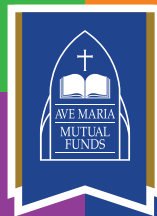
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# TOUR

From page 2

inviting retreats and dens, second-floor lofts styled as media rooms and gathering spaces, and a primary suite with an adjoining sitting room and office. Spanning nearly 1,900 square feet to more than 4,200 square feet under air, the models have three and four bedrooms.

Known as the pioneer in active adult communities for those 55 and older, Del Webb offers six villa and single-family model homes to tour in Del Webb Naples, a neighborhood noted for its exceptional amenities — the 18-hole Panther Run Golf Course, a tropical resort-style pool, a separate lap pool and not one but two clubhouses providing year-round exercise, social and events programming, a fitness center, casual restaurant, full-service bar and 18 courts for pickleball, bocce ball and tennis. Model homes feature stunning interiors, two and three bedrooms and 1,450 to 2,670 square feet of living space (ask about the new Palmary floor plan). Catering to a low-maintenance lifestyle, Del Webb Naples also has quick-move-in carriage homes and is offering buying incentives and door prizes during the Door-to-Door event.

Visitors to Maple Ridge can explore nine single-family model homes featuring beautiful contemporary interiors and learn about new quick-move-in homes with special savings in June. CC Homes highlights the many customization and personalized modifications available to homebuyers, from private guest suites to office spaces and wet bars. Designs range from a cozy bungalow with 1,133 square feet to expansive family estates with up to five bedrooms in nearly 4,000 square feet. Maple Ridge also offers a private clubhouse, a resort-style pool, fitness center, kids’ room, massage room, a full-time activi-



The Victoria in The National by Lennar Homes

COURTESY PHOTOS

ty director and a dog park. Eleven designer-furnished model homes provide a peek inside the National Golf & Country Club’s low-maintenance lifestyle and its inviting terrace and veranda condominiums, coach homes and single-family homes. Built by Lennar, the models feature two to five bedrooms within 1,300 square feet to nearly 3,475 square feet of living space. Home to an 18-hole golf course, The National has a lakefront clubhouse under construction that will offer a fitness center, tropical pool, bar and grill, a salon, wellness spa and lighted sports courts. Lennar has several quick-move-in homes



The Greenview in Maple Ridge by CC Homes



The Roseland in Avalon Park by Pulte Homes

and has eliminated the golf membership requirement for those who purchase a single-family home. It’s also offering door prizes during the model home tours and a 2% credit toward closing costs. Model homes in Ave Maria are open daily. For more information, visit [www.AveMaria.com/DoorToDoor](http://www.AveMaria.com/DoorToDoor). 🌟

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# Medical clinic opens, game store has new owners

BY ROBIN F. DEMATTIA  
Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

## Cadenza Medical Clinic

Raul Enad, M.D., FACP, opened Cadenza Medical Clinic in December 2022 after moving here last summer. He was traveling from Miami to Fort Myers for a job interview but stopped by Ave Maria on the way and was charmed by the friendliness of the people. He says it was a “natural draw” to move to the town and open a medical clinic after 30 years of clinical experience.

Dr. Enad shares his own story of developing arrhythmia (irregular heartbeat), chest pains, light-headedness and vision problems from stress. He turned to functional medicine, a form of alternative medicine that examines everything from a patient’s nutritional intake to their sleep habits, to help him understand the root causes of his problems and take steps to improve his health. Now he practices functional medicine, offering his patients micronutrient, food allergy, hormone and cardiac inflammatory marker testing, among others.

“Health cannot be accomplished just by taking medications,” he says. “I talk about diet, exercise and meditation.”

His staff includes Carolina Diaz, an esthetician and phlebotomist, who also helps with the medical spa aspect of the practice for treatments such as micronee-



SANDRA YEYATI / AVE MARIA SUN  
**Jason and Colleen Phelps**



**Nora Phelps**

dling, Botox and Restylane. Dr. Enad is a proponent of regenerative medicine and developed a skincare serum with vitamin C



**Dr. Raul Enad**

that he says helps make skin glow.

Cadenza Medical Clinic offers concierge medicine for members and public access to the clinic for non-urgent care issues.

## Way Out Toys & Games

In March, Colleen and Jason Phelps purchased this year-old business from founder Shawn Paul Jones. Ave Maria residents since 2016, the couple are gamers with their 10-year-old daughter, Nora, and shopped often at the store.

“We really like being part of something that involves kids and the community,” Mr. Phelps says.

Drawing on their daughter’s interests, they carry more products that might interest girls and have expanded a popular Tuesday Night Pokémon Pack Wars event. They’ve also brought in new arcade games, including Marvel vs. Capcom, and pinballs themed for Spider-Man, the Walking Dead and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. They’ve updated the store’s rewards program and also added birthday party packages.

The store carries products that appeal to all ages, from action figures and Barbie dolls to magic cards, Funko Pops cards and other collectibles.

“There really is something for everyone,” Mrs. Phelps says. “If you come in and take the time to look around, you’re bound to find something that interests you.”

■ **Cadenza Medical Clinic**  
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# FUN AROUND THE TOWN

Farmers market vendors and shoppers wrap up another season



Melinda Tako of European Gourmet Bakery travels from her home in Hollywood to sell her baked goods.



Maple Ridge resident Monica Cervera of Vikaas Art displays her resin art.



Andrea Roland, the owner of Studio DIY, sells personalized gifts including mugs, water bottles, stickers, glass cups and T-shirts. She lives in Naples and works from home.



Mike and Diann Ecret just moved here from southern New Jersey. She is a nursing professor at Ave Maria University.



Celia, Lori and Ariana Garcia live in Immokalee and come to Ave Maria for the dance academy, the farmers market and church services.



The sales rep for Fort Myers-based Better Than a Bistro shows off their frozen Kansas City ribeyes and wild-caught shrimp.

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# Meet a Townmaker: Fire Chief Michael Choate still loves having “the greatest job on the planet”

BY SANDRA YEYATI

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

When Fire Chief Michael Choate was just a boy, if you asked him what he wanted to be when he grew up, he would say a fireman, just like his father. Born and raised in central Florida, he graduated Hardee County High School with a mission to take every course and earn every state certification that would allow him to ride that shiny red ladder truck.

Mr. Choate reminisces about the start of his career: “As a young firefighter in my 20s, I remember the thrill of sitting in the back of that truck, riding backward on my way to a fire or vehicle accident, running lights and sirens, busting through intersections and cars moving out of our way, thinking to myself, ‘This is the greatest job on the planet. I can’t believe I get a paycheck for this.’”

He spent more than two decades at Hardee County Fire Rescue, where he was promoted through the ranks, ultimately serving as fire chief and public safety director for 10 years. Since 2016, he has been the district manager and fire chief of the Immokalee Fire Control District (IFCD), overseeing two fire stations in Immokalee and one in Ave Maria, which officially opened last June with one fully staffed fire truck and a medic unit. In 2022, they fielded 4,800 total calls; 1,031 (or 21.4%) came from Ave Maria. The IFCD is an independent taxing district, with five elected fire commissioners to whom Chief Choate reports.

“I’m the big-picture guy,” he explains. “I have to maintain the 1,000-foot view, so to speak. I’m responsible for the financial solvency of this place, for maintaining morale among our staff and for ensuring our readiness. Every single truck and every firefight-



Chief Choate at the dedication ceremony for the Immokalee Fire Control District's Station 32.

er has to be ready for an all-hazards type response.

“I also have to be a good steward of tax dollars. The fire commissioners are there to make sure I don’t spend money without it being justified, because it’s taxpayer dollars. I think over the time I’ve been here, I’ve proven that I have the citizens we serve forefront in my mind, and I make sure that we have everything we need to provide the very best possible service.”

Chief Choate believes fire and rescue is all

about customer service. A can-do attitude and politeness are paramount.

“I make sure our people are customer servants. Period. End of story,” he says. “People call us on their absolute worst day, and the end user doesn’t want excuses. They don’t care why it took us an extra minute or two to get to them, and rightfully so. They don’t care if we came from another call and had to drive across town to get to their address, or if we were tied up and a unit from another zone had to come in. All they care about is that

“People call us on their absolute worst day, and the end user doesn’t want excuses... All they care about is that they need help right now.”

— Fire Chief Michael Choate

they need help right now.”

He explains that because of federal exemptions for charities and others, 50% of the taxable properties and individuals in the IFCD don’t pay taxes, which means the district is fully funded by the remaining 50% that do pay taxes. “We simply don’t have the tax revenue yet to build second and third staffed units out here,” he says. “But all of that will come in time as our population here in Ave Maria continues to grow and more tax dollars roll in.”

Chief Choate’s vast experience, exuberant speaking style and clarity of purpose cause people to look up to him, but he is quick to direct all accolades to the men and women who save lives and protect property every day.

“I used to be possessive when I was a young fire chief. It was me me me—my guys, my department, my battalion chief,” he says. “But I don’t do that anymore. I’ve learned that this is not at all about me. It’s about the firefighters. They make me look good by doing their jobs, because what I hear when I walk into meetings

SEE TOWNMAKER, A8 ►

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# TOWNSMAN

From page 7

is, ‘Hey chief, I saw your guys in this vehicle accident yesterday. They were just clicking, tools were flying, roofs were coming off of cars and patients were being pulled out, and those guys didn’t even say 10 words to each other. They just knew what they were doing. You can tell they were ready for it.’ That’s the positive stuff I hear so much out of our community, and I’m just so proud to call myself their leader.”

Chief Choate and his wife, Linda, live in Avalon Park. They raised four sons in rural Wauchula, enjoying cows, a fishing pond and regular hunting trips. When the couple first moved to Ave Maria, they experienced a bit of a culture shock, but they’ve come to love the lifestyle here where everything is a golf cart ride away.

Three of their sons are in their 20s. Keith and Cole followed in their father’s footsteps and joined the fire service, while Clay, 31, chose a different profession. Last September the family lost Kyle (Keith’s twin brother) in an accident. He was 23, had recently completed the emergency medical technician academy and was about to begin the fire academy.

“The setback of losing a child has been unbearable. It’s an endless nightmare,” the chief says. “I’ve been out of focus, and I have to pay full credit to my deputy chief of operations who has assumed his role plus mine for months and months now. I’m slowly starting to refocus.”

Fire Station 32 in Ave Maria also serves as the IFCD headquarters. Chief Choate invites residents to stop by any time to tour the facilities. “It doesn’t matter what day of the week it is. If our ladder truck is sitting in the bays, that means our firefighters are here, and any one of them would be happy to show them around.” 🌻

# FUN AROUND THE TOWN

## Community Yard Sale brings out the bargain hunters



John Keefe, a resident of Maples Ridge, headed home with his loot.



Nisha Sedgwick from Avalon Park sold gently used fashion items.



Elise Rose comes early to the sale every year to get bargains like this original charcoal drawing for \$10.



Jean Paul Roggiere, director of community outreach for Health Care Network of Southwest Florida, which provided health information and free vaccines.



Shoppers Terry Reilly and Angie Marciniak



Carol Little from Del Webb



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# ALL AROUND AVE MARIA

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## OPEN TO THE PUBLIC



**Christmas in July**  
Get a head start on holiday shopping, support Ave Maria and have a jolly old time as merchants in Town Center and the Publix Retail Shops host Christmas in July from 3-8 p.m. Saturday, July 15. Yuletide spirits will be high, with Christmas-themed decorations, live holiday music, in-store specials and refreshments, and face-painting for the kids. To enter to win a grand prize basket, shoppers will be invited to get their Boutique Crawl bingo cards stamped at each of the participating shops for a drawing.



**Latin Fest**  
On Saturday, Aug. 19, from 11 a.m.-4 p.m. we celebrate our Hispanic community with Latin music and food, free face-painting and balloon art, a festive golf cart parade and shopping specials in the Town Center and the Publix Retail Shops. Each store will represent a different Latin country. Admission is free.

**Support Small Business September**  
Each day in September, a different Ave Maria business will be celebrated on social media (Facebook @avemariaflorida and Instagram @avemariafl), and on [www.avemaria.com](http://www.avemaria.com) blog and events page. Follow on social media for special promotions, refreshments and other surprises, and plan to explore the town's restaurants, shops and services.



**Trunk-or-Treat at Town Center**  
Trunk-or-Treat moves to Town Center this year from 3-6 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 28. Trunks decked out for the holiday will have candy for the kids. Residents will be invited to decorate their golf carts and car trunks and bring candy to distribute. This not-to-be-missed family night will feature a costume contest, games, face-painting, prizes, DJ music and more. Admission is free.



## MERCHANT EVENTS



**Way Out Toys & Games**  
Kids and adults of all ages and skills are invited to participate in the Pokémon Pack Wars, a fast-paced, bingo-style game, every Tuesday from 6:30-7 p.m., through the end of August. For \$20, each player receives three packs of new Pokémon cards to keep and use over four rounds of play. Winners receive Pokémon prizes.



**The Pub & Grill at Ave Maria**  
Once a month, The Pub hosts Friday Night Karaoke, inviting patrons to sing their favorite tunes from 7-10 p.m. Check [www.facebook.com/thepubatave](http://www.facebook.com/thepubatave) for upcoming dates and other event details.

**Oil Well Craft Beer**  
To celebrate **National Rosé Day** on Tuesday, June 10, patrons receive \$1 off rosé wine.  
On Wednesday, June 14, enjoy \$1 off Kentucky Bourbon Barrel Ale to commemorate **National Bourbon Day**.

Free **SpeedQuizzing** trivia nights led by Tom and Carol DiFlorio begin at 7 p.m. on Mondays, June 19, July 17 and Aug. 21.



Cruise Planners leads free, **adult bingo nights** from 7-9 p.m. Wednesdays, June 21, July 19 and Aug. 16, with prizes for the winners. Must be 21 and older to play.

Every Monday through Saturday from 5-8 p.m. there is at least one **food truck** at the Park of Commerce serving scrumptious food to go with Oil Well Craft Beer's libations.

Sarah Callahan leads **free bingo for all ages** from 6-8 p.m. Saturdays, July 1 and Aug. 5.



Celebrate **National Wine and Cheese Day** from 7-10 p.m. Tuesday, July 25, with four 3-ounce wine tastings for \$19 and four 5-ounce cheese tastings for \$19.

On National Wing Day, Saturday, July 29, join the **Second Annual Chicken Wing Competition** by bringing at least a dozen of your best chicken wings by 4 p.m. for judging by your peers.



To commemorate **National IPA Day**, on Thursday, Aug. 3, all house-brewed IPAs will be \$1 off.



**The Secret Ingredient**  
Every **Monday is 55+** and Fabulous Day when shoppers ages 55 and over save 10% off one regularly priced item.

On Wednesdays, check Facebook.com/shopthesecretingredient for the **Weekly Wednesday Sale** announcement detailing which item will be discounted that day.

On National **Flip-Flop Day**, Friday, June 16, save 20% on all flip-flops in the store.

On **National Splurge Day**, Sunday, June 18, spend \$200 at and receive a free pair of earrings (up to a \$25 value).



For **National Pink Day**, Friday, June 23, shoppers wearing pink receive 20% off one regularly priced item.

On **National Sunglass Day**, Tuesday, June 27, buy one pair of sunglasses and get a second one free.

On **Made in the U.S.A. Day**, Sunday, July 2, shoppers receive 10% off all fashion made in the U.S.

On **National Fashion Day**, Sunday, July 9, the shop will put on a mini-fashion show at 6 p.m.



On **National Prosecco Day**, Sunday, Aug. 13, shoppers are invited to enjoy a free glass of wine from 11 a.m.-3 p.m.



# ALL AROUND AVE MARIA

To celebrate **National Senior Citizen Day**, Monday, Aug. 21, all seniors receive 20% off one item.

## AVE MARIA UNIVERSITY ATHLETICS

Schedule is subject to change, check [www.avemariagayrenes.com](http://www.avemariagayrenes.com) for updates.

- Friday, Aug. 11**  
Men's Soccer vs. Millennia Atlantic, 7 p.m.
- Tuesday, Aug. 15**  
Men's Soccer vs. Atlantis, 7 p.m.
- Friday, Aug. 18**  
Men's Soccer vs. Trinity (Fla.), 5 p.m.

## AVE MARIA RESIDENTS ONLY

Organizers request pre-registration via the Ave Maria Master Association (AMMA) calendar at [www.avemariamasterassociation.com](http://www.avemariamasterassociation.com). For more information, call 239-867-4322. Dates and details subject to change.

**Coffee with a Twiss**  
This casual gathering with AMMA Executive Director Kim Twiss held from 10-11 a.m. every second Thursday of the month allows homeowners to ask questions and get updates pertaining to the master association and community news. Next dates are: June 8, July 13 and Aug. 10.



**Super Science and Amazing Art Camp**  
An instructor from Super Science ([www.SuperScienceFL.com](http://www.SuperScienceFL.com)) will host two science camp sessions for ages 6-12 every Tuesday, June 13-July 11. Sessions are from 9-10:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.-noon in Pavilion 3 at South Park. Cost is \$5 per session. Activities include STEM challenges, design-and-build solutions using science, technology, engineering and math skills. Pre-registration is required via the AMMA calendar.

**Creative Corner Kids Crafts**  
Encouraging children (ages 6 and up) to use their imagination and invent their own artsy creations in the company of other kids, these super-fun crafting parties run from 9-10:30 a.m. Wednesdays in June and July in the AMMA event room. Cost is \$5 per child per day. Pre-registration is required via the AMMA calendar.

**Hot Summer Nights**  
Sponsored by the Collier County Sheriff's Office, this fun family event in North Park from 6-9 p.m. Friday, June 23, features food, games and lots of wholesome fun for kids of all ages.



**Teens Murder Mystery Dance Party**  
Teens are invited to a murder mystery dance party from 7-9:30 p.m. Saturday, June 24, in the AMMA event room. Participants can choose to either play the part of one of



COURTESY PHOTO

the characters or be a sleuth attempting to solve the mystery. This fun event is presented by the Ave Maria Teen's Social Council. For pricing and additional details, check the AMMA website calendar.

**"Footloose" dinner theater outing**  
Join your Ave Maria neighbors for a dinner theater excursion to see the iconic play "Footloose" at the Broadway Palm Dinner Theatre in Fort Myers on Friday, June 30. The \$75 per-person cost includes dinner at 5:30 p.m. followed by the 7 p.m. performance. Reservations are required via the AMMA calendar. Transportation is on your own; carpooling with friends is encouraged.



**Fourth of July at the water park**  
Celebrate Independence Day from 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Tuesday, July 4, at the Ave Maria Water Park, featuring live DJ music, food specials from CJ's Water Park Cafe, kids' games and a watermelon-eating contest for all ages. Admission is free for water park members and \$5 for others.

**Ave Maria Stewardship Community District (AMSCD) Meetings**  
Monthly AMSCD meetings are open to the public and held in the AMMA meeting room beginning at 9 a.m. Upcoming dates are Tuesdays, July 11, Aug. 1 and Sept. 12. Visit [www.avemariastewardshipcd.org](http://www.avemariastewardshipcd.org) for more information and updates.



**Sports Camp**  
Kids ages 9-12 are invited to a free sports camp at the North Park led by Parks and Recreation Manager John Croce. Spend time with old and new friends while learning sports skills, playing field games and exercising in the great outdoors. The camp runs

from 10 a.m.-noon Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays during the weeks of July 17 and July 24. The last Friday of the series (July 28) will be a Water Park day. All youth must be registered and waivers signed by July 10. Details and registration forms will be available on the AMMA website calendar.



**Christmas in July at the water park**  
Celebrate the yuletide spirit from 9-11 a.m. Saturday, July 15, at the Ave Maria Water Park, featuring breakfast snack foods and drinks, a surprise visit from Santa and a Christmas craft project. Admission is free for water park members and \$5 for others.

**Adult Games Group**  
Adults looking for a friendly game of cards (Skip-Bo, Sequence and others) or Mexican Train (dominoes) are welcome to join the group from 1-3 p.m. Mondays and Thursdays in the AMMA card room.

## SPORTS AND FITNESS (RESIDENTS ONLY)

**Zumba Classes**  
Staying fit is pure joy at Zumba class in the AMMA event room. The high-energy workout mixing salsa, cha cha and samba movements begins at 6:30 p.m. Tuesdays. Contact [vanezumba@gmail.com](mailto:vanezumba@gmail.com) to register.

**Swimming Lessons**  
Through August, the Ave Maria Water Park is offering swimming lessons sanctioned by the American Red Cross for water babies (6 months-3 years old), preschoolers (3-5 years old) and youth (6-12 years old). Weekday morning and weekend classes available. Cost is \$65 per student for eight lessons. Must register in person. For more information, call 239-348-8384.



**Water Exercise Classes**  
Mondays through Thursdays and Saturdays from 9-10 a.m., the Ave Maria Water

Park offers water exercise classes alternating between cardio and muscle-strengthening routines for residents (and their guests) ages 13 and above. All necessary equipment is provided, including resistance gloves, noodles, pool buoys and barbells. Cost is \$65 for 20 lessons or \$5 per lesson. For more information, call 239-348-8384.

**Summer Progressive Swim Team**  
Young people ages 6-18 looking to get a great workout and learn what it takes to be a competitive swimmer are invited to join the water park's Summer Progressive Swim Team, featuring coaching by certified instructors. The team will meet Mondays through Thursdays from 8-9 a.m. from June 5 through Aug. 3. The cost is \$65 per month. For more information, call 239-348-8384.

**Men's Pick-up Soccer**  
Players 16 and older looking for a good workout and team camaraderie are welcome to join these resident-organized games at 6 p.m. Wednesdays and Sundays on North Park's soccer field #2.



**Co-Ed Softball 55-plus**  
Friendly softball games for neighbors ages 55 and older are held from 12:30-3 p.m. at South Park biweekly on Sundays. Players at all levels are welcome to participate. Contact Artie Ginsberg at [agins@hotmail.com](mailto:agins@hotmail.com) or 516-314-1351 to find out the summer dates.

**Leon Fit Free Fitness Class**  
This summer, Leon Fit fitness classes will be held on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 9:15 a.m. at the South Park Pavilion #3 and at 6:45 p.m. at Mercato at Ave. For more information, call Mr. Leon at 786-436-3323. Text the same number to register.

**Quest Martial Arts Academy Classes**  
Led by veteran instructor Kenny Quintero, these martial arts classes start at 5 p.m. Mondays and at 9:30 a.m. Saturdays in the AMMA event room. For more information, call Crystal at 239-371-6073 or visit [www.questmartialartsacademy.com](http://www.questmartialartsacademy.com). 🌟



## Planning is well underway for 2024 signature events

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Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

These might be the lazy days of summer, but in the background, organizers are plotting and planning a few gigantic parties for next season that will not only bring neighbors together but will also introduce newcomers to Ave Maria. Some of these signature events have become beloved traditions year after year, while others are reimagined or new additions. As more people visit and move to A Big Kind of Small Town, the community's resources and amenities continue to expand and improve, as do its celebrations. Save these dates in 2024. You won't want to miss the fun.

**Saturday, Jan. 27**

Formerly a Donahue Academy fundraiser and now organized by the Knights of Columbus, this popular event returns to the Town Center with scores of grill teams competing for prize money and trophies. Live music, exciting raffles, vendor booths, kids' activities and, of course, scrumptious steak dinners all add to the fun. The charitable organizations slated to benefit from this fundraiser will be announced at a later date.



SANDRA YEYATI / AVE  
MARIA SUN

**Fire Commissioner Don Gunther got fired up for the Knights of Columbus team at the 2023 Sunshine State Steak Cook-off.**



SANDRA YEYATI / AVE MARIA SUN

**Attendees at this year's Margarita & Taco Festival couldn't help but fall in line when a Brazilian dancer showed them how it's done.**

## Saturday, Feb. 3

This year's inaugural Taste of Ave was a great success, proving that Ave Maria residents really have everything they need right here in town. The Town Center event will include booths for small businesses, local charities and Ave Maria University, as well as the Biz Kids Expo, a showcase of products and services by young, emerging entrepreneurs that call Ave Maria home. Expect live music by everyone's favorite hometown bands, Steinbeck Way and the Back Country Boys. This is a fantastic opportunity to boost the local economy and forge meaningful relationships within the community.



AMELIA CONTE / AVE MARIA SUN

**Michael Jaenvega of OASIS The Kitchen Lounge** cooked up a variety of the restaurant's popular dishes at the inaugural Taste of Ave and looks forward to returning for the 2024 event.

**Saturday, Feb. 17**

Every year, thousands of blues aficionados come from far and wide to enjoy full sets by South Florida's biggest names in blues entertainment. Past performers have included Deb and the Dynamics, Old School and Little Eddie and the Fat Fingers. It's Ave Maria's biggest party of the season. The fun includes vintage and high-performance car exhibits, finger-licking-good barbecue and quenching libations, plus a great selection of arts and crafts vendors, plus face painting and other kids' activities. Bring your lawn chairs and dancing shoes to the Town Center for this must-see (and hear) extravaganza.




SANDRA YEYATI / AVE MARIA SUN

**Deb & the Dynamics made sure there was plenty of blues at this year's Blues, Brews & BBQ Festival in the Town Center.**

## Saturday, March 16

The town takes on a carnival atmosphere for this annual shindig that includes Latin music performers, dancing in the streets, Luche Libre wrestling, exotic animal encounters, face painting, balloon artists, kids' games, arts and crafts vendors, a car show, adult beverages and lots of Mexican cuisine. Your face will hurt from so much smiling! 🌻


# HOT SUMMER SAVINGS!




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# AVE MARIA COMMUNITIES

SUMMER 2023

WWW.AVEMARIASUN.COM

| A13



## AVALON PARK

### About the community

**From the \$400,000s - \$1,000,000+**

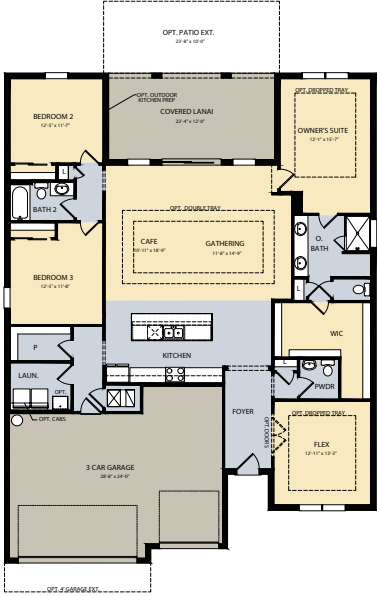
It's easy to stay active and have family fun at Avalon Park. Located within walking or biking distance to downtown Ave Maria, Avalon Park attracts families looking for exceptional schools, close proximity to neighborhood parks, and plenty of living space. Avalon Park offers spacious homesites, unique architectural exteriors, and 11 consumer-inspired

one- and two-story single-family homes that combine Pulte Homes' signature quality construction and personalized design opportunities. With home designs including up to seven bedrooms and 6½ bathrooms in 5,000-plus square feet of living space, you are sure to find your dream new home to fit your family's needs now and in the future.



As one of the nation's largest and most respected homebuilders with more than 70 years of homebuilding experience, Pulte Homes takes pride in putting that experience to work for you. With insightful, consumer-inspired home designs, Pulte houses offer the best in livability, with personalization options and

versatile living spaces to make everyday moments easier and more enjoyable. With a clear focus on quality construction and a simplified buying experience, Pulte Homes will help you get into your dream home easily. That's More Life Built In®, and that's exactly what you'll find at Avalon Park.



### Ashby

- Starting from the low \$500,000s
- 2,298+ square feet
- Three to four bedrooms
- 2½ to four bathrooms
- Three-car garage

**Avalon Park at Ave Maria**  
**4364 Washington Place, Ave Maria, FL 34142**  
**239-842-1657**





# Del Webb<sup>®</sup> NAPLES

## About the community

From the \$300,000s - \$1,000,000+

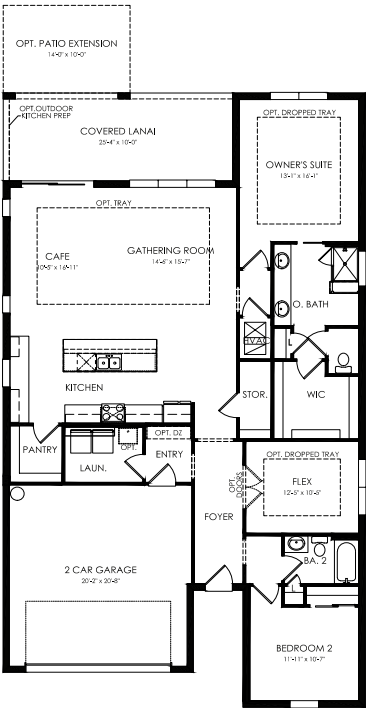
Del Webb Naples brings premier resort-style amenities and a lifestyle nothing short of extraordinary to Ave Maria. Here, daily possibilities for new adventures await. Where every day is different – and entirely up to you. From a dip in the pool to a friendly game of pickleball, in Del Webb Naples you'll find countless opportunities to grow, thrive, and enjoy those new passions you've been waiting to explore. Del Webb Naples provides amenities, programs, and support needed for health and wellness,

conveniently located right where you live. No matter how full or fulfilling you want your days to be, you'll find a way to energize your mind, body, and spirit the way you've always wanted to. Enjoy golf, bocce ball, bicycling, dance instruction, art, endless ways to socialize, and opportunities to give back to the community that surrounds you. No matter one's stage in life, in Del Webb Naples you'll never cease to be amazed at how rich your days can be. We believe you'll like it here.

# Del Webb<sup>®</sup>

No one understands the importance of community like Del Webb. Del Webb communities are an extension of the homeowners who live there – a collection of passions and activities you love to enjoy with others. When you choose to build in a Del Webb 55+ active adult community, you get the benefit of more than six decades of homebuilding experience. With homes

designed for how you live, including the features that matter most to you, all backed by a warranty you can rely on, you'll feel secure now and into the future. Our streamlined process makes it easy for you to build the home you've always wanted in the kind of vibrant community you've been looking for.



## Palmary

- Starting from the upper \$400,000s
- 1,943+ square feet
- Two to three bedrooms
- Two bathrooms
- Two-car garage

**Del Webb Naples**  
**6028 Victory Drive, Ave Maria, FL 34142**  
**239-842-9643**





# About the community

Maple Ridge at Ave Maria is a thoughtfully designed community with a myriad of home designs, all of which combine beautiful curb appeal with impressive interior layouts built for modern lifestyles. CC Homes is the builder behind this community and they are among the many reasons Ave Maria has become such a rapidly growing neighborhood attracting new residents from the Gulf Coast, Southeast Florida and beyond. With more than 75 years of combined experience in South Florida real estate, Mr. Armando Codina and Mr. Jim Carr along with Mr. Andres Miyares have set a new standard for quality new construction homes in desirable communities, with a wide range of pricing from entry-level to prestigious exclusivity.

CC Homes communities throughout Florida have been recognized for their incredible market appeal, outstanding quality, and resident satisfaction time and time again, having built thousands of homes and residences. Homes built by CC Homes are designed to improve people’s lives. Modern features, smart floor plans, and upscale amenities combine for the ultimate Florida lifestyle. Homeowners at Maple Ridge are pampered with high-end designer features included in the base price. Maple Ridge neighborhoods include a brand-new clubhouse for residents with resort-style pool and cabanas, fitness center, billiard room, exercise park, concierge, coffee bar, exhibition kitchen, and kids’ room.

**New contemporary homes available now at Maple Ridge. Tour new models today.**



**Starting from the \$300,000s**

CC Homes is ranked as one of the top five new home builders in South Florida and Southwest Florida, offering affordable single-family luxury in Ave Maria’s Maple Ridge neighborhoods. Homeowners are pampered with high-end designer features included in

the base price. Maple Ridge neighborhoods include a brand-new clubhouse for residents with resort-style pool and cabanas, fitness center, billiard room, exercise park, concierge, coffee bar, exhibition kitchen and kids’ room.



## Harbour

- 3,522 a/c square feet
- Four to six bedrooms
- 3½ to 5½ bathrooms
- Ground floor owners suite
- Two- or three-car garage

**Maple Ridge**  
**5009 Alonza Avenue, Ave Maria, FL 34142**  
**833-729-1783 | www.MapleRidgeFL.com**





# About the community

As part of the highly sought after new home community, Maple Ridge at Ave Maria- Silverwood offers exciting residential choices to buyers. Silverwood provides homeowners the perfect home at a great value. All of these single-family homes are beautifully designed with Mediterranean-inspired architecture and an inviting array of designer features included as well as some custom options available. Both Silverwood and Maple Ridge have a superb location within Ave Maria, so residents benefit from a great school district and sense of community.

Floor plan spotlight: The Huntington is a new construction, one-story home with three bedrooms, two baths, great room, eat-in kitchen, storage, master suite with walk-in closet and attached garage. Premium features included that are standard include designer brand faucets and fixtures, and tile flooring. Gourmet kitchens have stainless steel appliances, European-style wood cabinetry and quartz countertops. A spa-like master bathroom features double sinks with quartz vanity tops and a spacious shower.



## Select homesites available. Inquire today!

CC Homes is ranked as one of the top five new home builders in South Florida and Southwest Florida, offering affordable single-family luxury in Ave Maria's Maple Ridge neighborhoods. Homeowners are pampered with high-end designer features

included in the base price. Maple Ridge neighborhoods include a brand-new clubhouse for residents with resort-style pool and cabanas, fitness center, billiard room, exercise park, concierge, coffee bar, exhibition kitchen and kids' room.



## Huntington

- Model home is now open for viewing.
- 1,630 a/c square feet
  - Three bedrooms
  - Two bathrooms
  - His and hers walk-in closets in master bedroom
  - One-car garage

**Maple Ridge**  
**5009 Alonza Avenue, Ave Maria, FL 34142**  
**833-729-1783 | www.MapleRidgeFL.com**



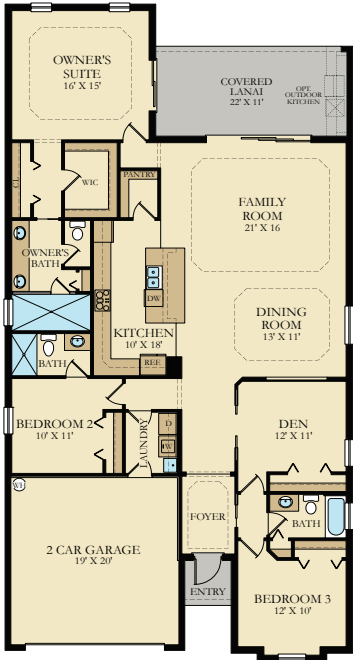
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About the community

Lennar is excited to bring its popular Everything’s Included® homes and resort lifestyle amenities to the charm, convenience, and values of Ave Maria. The National Golf & Country Club will offer a fresh coastal aesthetic throughout the home designs and on-site amenities including an 18-hole Gordon Lewis-designed golf course, complimented by world-class amenities for the entire family to enjoy. A variety of floorplans will be offered in Terrace and Veranda condominiums, coach homes, and executive and estate single-family homes. The National Golf & Country Club will

feature its own clubhouse with a pro shop, formal and casual dining, a resort-style pool and spa, fitness center with yoga/aerobics room, spa treatment rooms and beauty salon. Active residents can take advantage of Har-Tru tennis courts, pickle and bocce ball, a putting green, chipping area, and a driving range. This all-encompassing amenity campus is designed to bring the community together, with spaces for friends new and old to gather. Whether you are a seasonal resident or looking to lay down roots, The National Golf & Country Club has the ideal home for you.



Maria

- Starting from the \$500,000s
- 2,247 square feet
- Three bedrooms + den
- Three bathrooms



Starting from the high \$200,000s

Lennar is one of America’s leading builders of quality homes since 1954, and is one of the biggest homebuilders in Southwest Florida. Experience unprecedented value through Lennar’s Everything’s Included®, simply including quality features and finishes that homeowners want and need, at no extra charge.

Simplify your home buying experience by including everything you need in a new home and community. And once you find your perfect home, our family of companies are there to assist you every step of the way with your mortgage, title and insurance needs for an enjoyable and hassle-free closing.

Ask about our summer savings

The National Golf & Country Club  
6090 Artisan Court, Ave Maria, FL 34142  
239-867-9090 | www.TheNationalVIP.com



# Del Webb Naples sets the standard for an active adult lifestyle

BY Nanci Theoret

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Del Webb Naples in Ave Maria proves playgrounds and playtime aren't mutually exclusive to children.

Here, the grown-up version is more than a small sandbox, a plain play lawn. It's a rolling, sweeping tapestry of grass, water, sand and sky as far as the eye can see. And this adult playground is beyond mere child's play.

As a star of Del Webb Naples' engaging, social lifestyle for adults 55+, the newly renovated Panther Run Golf Course ranks among members' favorite playtime experiences. Offering 18 holes of championship Gordon Lewis-designed golf, the course rambles over 4 miles — or 7,532 yards when played from the back tees. Its new TifEagle greens and tree-lined Bimini Bermudagrass fairways, roughs and tee boxes lend a verdant contrast to the sculptural precision of updated sand bunkers and lakes that add to the course's sheer beauty but also factor into play.

"The game-improving renovations must be experienced to appreciate," says Dan Brooks, Panther Run Golf Club's golf course superintendent.

"TifEagle and Bimini turfgrasses are the gold standards for golf courses," Mr. Brooks explains. "Our members are definitely noticing the difference in their games. Bimini Bermudagrass was developed here in Naples and is now the go-to turfgrass because of its wear tolerance, recovery and drought resistance. We are excited to bring this to our membership."

Panther Run's picturesque setting is immersed within rolling fairways, preserves, sand bunkers, sabal palms and lakes — all winding their way to the remarkable pièce de resistance: the signature 18th hole with the green on a peninsula surrounded by water and bunkers.

The club also offers tournaments, leagues and private and group lessons led by PGA professionals. The golf shop is stocked with the latest clubs, equipment and apparel.

Golf memberships are optional and in demand, reflecting the nationwide growth in the game. With more than 325 members, the club has a 600-member cap.

Panther Run Golf Club complements the active lifestyle enjoyed by residents of Del Webb Naples, created by PulteGroup, the nation's forerunner of 55+ active-adult communities. When it just doesn't feel like a golf day, the community's playground shifts to an expansive amenity campus. It's Del Webb's largest in Southwest Florida, with two clubhouses and one of the region's most dynamic pickleball programs.

"People say Del Webb Naples is like a cruise ship," says Joshua Millward, the community's full-time lifestyle director. "There's something going on every day, whether it's a simple game of cards or a dance with 250 people. It's a party every day."

Mr. Millward coordinates the community's year-round social calendar of events, activities and programs — one that's so robust, it astounds his father, a former lifestyle director at other Florida communities for active adults.

"Del Webb Naples' social lifestyle really stands out," the younger Mr. Millward says. "Our residents are vibrant. They showed up to our Country Western Night in boots and cowboy hats and had fun dressing to the theme of our '70s Night." Likewise, this year's St. Patrick's Day party (see photos on facing page) was cause for great cheer.

The Club at Del Webb Naples offers the most extensive amenity campus in the Southwest Florida Del Webb communities. Panther Run Golf Club includes an 18-hole golf course, pro shop and The Rusty Putter restaurant. The Oasis Club offers 12,000 square feet of resort and fitness pools, tennis and bocce courts, fitness center, library, café, and special events room. Grand Hall has more than



COURTESY PHOTOS

**The Club at Del Webb Naples has the most extensive amenities campus in the Southwest Florida Del Webb communities.**

14,000 square feet of amenity space including social halls, a veranda, catering kitchen, a golf simulator and card and game rooms.

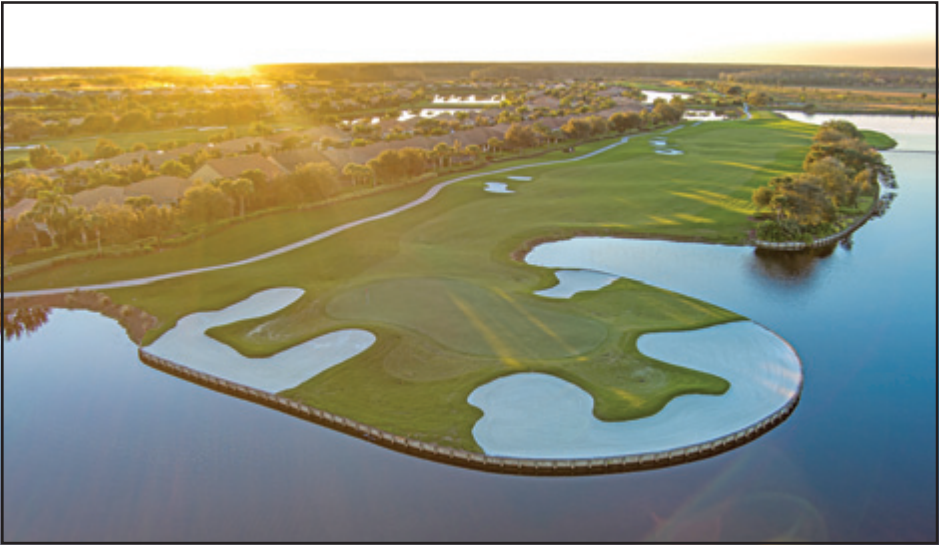
And this being Florida, amenities and sitting areas extend outside to inviting verandas, Adirondack chairs circling a stone-clad firepit, an amphitheater for live entertainment and chaises around and in the signature pool, shaded by market umbrellas whose royal blue hue repeats in canopies above the community's 18 pickleball, bocce ball and tennis courts.

## At home in Del Webb

Del Webb Naples recently introduced a new development phase for the community's array of homes that are as varied as its lifestyle: condominium carriage homes, villas and single-family homes overlooking rolling golf fairways, nature preserves and lakes. With maintenance included in every home, residents have more time to enjoy the amenities and live life to the fullest.

Nineteen home designs feature open-concept floor plans catering to modern lifestyles and optimal livability. They blend spacious gathering rooms, cafés and island kitchens and offer private lanais or balconies, oversized walk-in closets in owners' suites and integrated energy-saving and smart home features.

"Our different floor plans fit the needs of all buyers," says sales consultant Troy White. "We collaborate with you to create an inspired, personalized design that speaks to your style



**Panther Run Golf Course offers 18 holes of Gordon Lewis-designed golf.**

and budget. You can easily visualize your design options or create an individualized layout using our interactive floor plans and design tools."

Customizable per-plan options allow buyers to personalize their home by extending outdoor living spaces and garages, adding zero-corner sliding doors, sunrooms or additional bedrooms and bathrooms, and more. Homebuyers also enjoy the convenience of Del Webb's "Every Service under one Roof," providing a simple, worry-free homebuilding process.



**Model home row in Del Webb Naples by PulteGroup**

Six professionally furnished model homes showcase the community's many homebuying options and include the single-family Mystique, one of Del Webb's most popular floor plans beloved for its flexibility. A selection of quick-move-in homes is also available, allowing buyers to start enjoying the Del Webb lifestyle sooner, Mr. White says. "Quick-move-in homes really appeal to people who are ready to retire now and in the coming months."

Tours of the community's amenities and Panther Run Golf Club help potential homebuyers envision their future lifestyle at Del Webb Naples. Mr. White also introduces visitors to Mr. Millward and the golf team.

"Whatever you love to do, our lifestyle director can connect you with people who love it as much as you do," Mr. White says. "We offer more than a beautiful home; we offer a place to belong and an active community where people love life and are having fun living it."

PulteGroup earned the Florida Green Building Coalition's top honor as Builder of the Year for the most single-family homes certified in 2020. Del Webb is committed to using environmentally friendly green products, best practices and sustainable techniques.

"While Del Webb Naples offers beautiful quality-built homes, you have the added benefits of living in Ave Maria and all it has to offer," says Mr. White. "Ave Maria is a quiet, quaint and safe town where there is always something going on. You're not just buying a home; you're buying a lifestyle."

Model homes in Del Webb Naples are open daily at 6028 Victory Drive. For more information, visit [www.DelWebb.com/Naples](http://www.DelWebb.com/Naples) or call 239-842-9643. 🌻



# FUN AROUND THE TOWN

## St. Patrick's Day party at Del Webb



- 1. Randy and Artie Ginsburg
- 2. Annie Spence, the life of the party
- 3. Mitzy Seijo of the local band Steinbeck Way gladly gives "more cowbell!"
- 4. Cheryl Skogen and Carrie Giacobone
- 5. Gracie Alger
- 6. Thumbs up for the luck of the Irish!
- 7. Barb and Paul Sparrow
- 8. Bill and Alba Thater
- 9. Rosemarie and Tom Maltese
- 10. Chris Webb, Jack West, Mitzy Seijo, Glenn Dove and Drew Turner of Steinbeck Way

**This year's St. Patrick's Day party at Del Webb was just one of many themed parties on the 55+ community's packed social calendar. As is always the case, live music brings partygoers to their feet.**





# He’s back: Original Donahue Academy teacher steps into the principal’s office

BY ROBIN F. DEMATTIA  
Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Marc Snyder and his wife, Cynthia, were among Ave Maria’s initial homebuyers and the first two teachers hired for Rhodora J. Donahue Academy when it opened in 2007.

After several years teaching at the academy, Dr. Snyder further pursued his own education, earning a master’s degree in educational leadership and administration, and later a doctor of education in higher education, from Nova Southeastern University in Fort Lauderdale. It was no surprise when he sought a larger role at the academy.

Dan Guernsey, the principal who hired Dr. Snyder, encouraged his faculty member to leave Donahue and gain more leadership experience elsewhere. He even put Dr. Snyder in touch with a man who was starting a school in Spain, where the Snyders eventually moved in 2013. For two years, Dr. Snyder served as the school’s principal, while Mrs. Snyder taught kindergarten.

The couple returned stateside in 2015 for Dr. Snyder to serve as principal of True North Classical Academy that was opening in Miami, gaining him more experience.

It was a circuitous route, but solid career guidance has brought Dr. Snyder full circle. After serving as vice principal of Donahue Academy this past school year, he has replaced Dr. Guernsey as principal.

“I’m excited to be taking on this position and feel extremely humbled and blessed to be appointed,” Dr. Snyder says. “It’s a place that I love dearly.”

He grew up in Philadelphia, doing well academically and participating on the wrestling and volleyball teams in high school. He earned a bachelor’s degree in microbiology from Florida Atlantic University with ideas of



SANDRA YEYATI / AVE MARIA SUN

Dr. Marc Snyder says the Catholic classic school is “the best of both worlds.”

attending med school but felt a calling to the priesthood, so he studied at a Denver-based seminary for three years.

He ultimately came back to Florida and taught middle school science in Plantation for three years and then at a Catholic high school

for one year.

“I loved that Donahue was a Catholic classic school,” Dr. Snyder says about his first position as a teacher at the academy back in 2007. “You don’t find that combination very often. It’s the best of both worlds.” He

and his wife stayed there until 2013. Coming back nine years later as vice principal, Dr. Snyder found the school’s mission and vision remained the same, but the community had changed.

“Ave Maria has matured as a town,” he notes. “It’s grown up in terms of the number of houses and people and different kinds of businesses. There was a point when the town first opened that you would go to a store and always see someone you knew. Now, I’m always meeting someone new.”

Donahue Academy had about 200 students the first time the Snyders taught there; the most recent academic year had 362 students, and the 2023-24 year will start with 420 students. Four new classrooms were recently completed, and modular classrooms are anticipated in 2024-25 to allow for doubling K-5 attendance from 180 to 360.

“We have 200 students currently on a wait list and feel a moral imperative to grow the school,” Dr. Snyder says. They plan to launch a capital campaign to build a new wing, perhaps in 2028.

The school is adding boys’ baseball and girls’ softball next year and is thinking about golf. Academically, Dr. Snyder says he wants Donahue Academy “to become the best Catholic classical school in the nation. I really want Donahue to be the beacon that other Catholic classical schools turn to as the model.”

It took leaving Donahue Academy and Ave Maria for Dr. Snyder to find this job, but he says it was worth it.

“I really thank Dr. Guernsey for encouraging me to spread my wings and go outside Ave Maria to gain various experiences and leadership skills,” he says. “There is no doubt in my mind that I moved forward as a leader and am in a position fully capable of leading Donahue Academy through its next phase.” 🌟

## Donahue Academy 2022-23 highlights

### » ACADEMICS

- Faith Romero and Charlotte Taddei received international honors for their essays in a Knights of Columbus contest (first time that two from the same school won).
- Mary Fairchild won a \$2,000 award for top paper at the most prestigious Model UN tournament in Southwest Florida.
- All seniors completed a 15-plus-page research paper defending a thesis within a challenging and engaging topic before the community.
- 22 students won awards in the National

Latin Exam, including Paul Jahnke and Rachel Kinnick, who won golden summa cum laude honors.

- Andrew Graham is a National Merit scholar.
- Middle school robotics made semifinals in a major regional tournament.

### » ATHLETICS

- Middle school boys’ and girls’ cross-country teams finished as Sunshine Athletic Conference champions.
- The high school football team had an undefeated regular season and were Bay Conference champions, winning

quarter-final and semifinal playoff games. They reached the state championship game in the Sunshine State Athletic Conference and were runner up in eight-man football (nine all-state players and two second team players, plus the head coach was named Coach of the Year).

- High school boys’ basketball team was Paradise Coast Athletic Conference (PCAC) champions.
- High school girls’ basketball team made PCAC champions and advanced to regionals in the state series.
- Grade school girls’ basketball team

(5/6) made SAC champions.

- High school boys’ soccer made PCAC champions and advanced to regionals in state series.
- Middle school boys’ soccer made SAC champions.
- Middle school boys’ and girls’ track and field made SAC champions.
- High school boys’ and girls’ track and field teams advanced six athletes to regionals in state series.
- High school baseball and softball will be added next spring.





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# AMU football star driven to give back to the town of Ave Maria

**BY ROBIN F. DEMATTIA**  
Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

The town of Ave Maria has been very good to Savohn Hunt, and he's been good to it in return.

Mr. Hunt played high school football and initially signed on to play at Morehead State University, but they didn't offer him a full scholarship. Then his high school coach, Joe Patterson, became head coach at Ave Maria University (AMU) and helped Mr. Hunt secure the funding he needed for his college education.

Having played four years in the AMU football program, Mr. Hunt was a two-year team captain and earned All-American honors following his senior season in 2019. He graduated in 2020 with a degree in exercise physiology, after having been named the university's "Mr. Ave," an honor given to the student who best embodies AMU's culture.

He had plans to play professional football as part of an indoor league when the pandemic sidelined that idea. He thought of a better one.

"I came to the conclusion that I wanted to marry my wife a lot more than I wanted to play football," he said. "I wanted to build a career where I could provide for her and a family."

He reached out to Coach Patterson, who offered Mr. Hunt a student support advisor position. Mr. Hunt also became a resident director, living in a dorm with his wife, Emily, and son Tyson, who was born in December.

Because the couple wanted Mrs. Hunt to be a stay-at-home mom, Mr. Hunt began thinking of ways to earn more money.

In June 2022, he decided to offer rides to and from area airports. It was another good idea.

"I posted it on Facebook and within a day was hit up about rides," he says. "People said it's a great service that we need. It caught fire."

By that September, Ave Rides was an official business that employed AMU students looking to earn some extra cash with a job offering flexible hours.

"I was bombarded with so many requests to do rides, but I still had to work two other jobs," Mr. Hunt says. "I was unable to do all the rides, so I found people I knew and trusted who went to the university." He even lent them his car if they didn't have one.

Ave Rides booked more than 500 rides in its first 10 months and now has about 20 drivers. Most customers are traveling to or from Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW) in Fort Myers, but drivers also take people to Fort Lauderdale, Miami and Punta Gorda. Trips to Seminole Casino Immokalee or for dinner in Naples are also popular. The company also agreed for a trip to the Orlando International Airport once.



SANDRA YEYATI / AVE MARIA SUN

Savohn Hunt graduated in 2020 and was named "Mr. Ave" in recognition of the way he embodies the Ave Maria University culture.

"We're happy to solve a big need," Mr. Hunt says.

Even though Ave Rides "caught lightning in a bottle," he says, he wanted to find a way to manage the financial highs and lows of season. So, he launched Ave Rides Auto Spa, a mobile detailing business, in March. Three levels of service start with wash, wax and tire shine and can include interior vacuuming, seat cleaning, leather conditioning, deodorizing and bug protection.

"It's going well so far," he says. "We offer the same premier, reliable service that Ave

"I'm so glad I get to live here. I went to school here, got married here, started a family here and work here. I'm happy to give back to a place that has given me so much."

— Savohn Hunt

Rides has." He adds the idea for the mobile detailing sprang from all the rides he and his employees give. "Who knows better how to keep a car clean than someone who has to do it 24/7," he says.

Mr. Hunt also joined forces with some young adults who were providing this service as a side business, so he combines their skills with his marketing and built-in customer base.

Ave Rides Auto Spa travels to Naples, Fort Myers, Bonita Springs and Estero to work on

vehicles.

Starting new businesses comes easy to Mr. Hunt. He was 10 when he opened a business cutting lawns. In high school, he developed a business cleaning and reselling sneakers on eBay and Facebook.

"If you ask any other entrepreneur, you start one business, you want to start another. It's addicting."

He also likes how his businesses help connect members of the town with AMU students. "The clients love to hear how the students ended up here and what they're studying. And the students get to network with the people in our community."

It's a town that has meant much to Mr. Hunt.

"I'm so glad I get to live here," he says. "I went to school here, got married here, started a family here and work here. I'm happy to give back to a place that has given me so much." 🌻

— For more information, visit [www.facebook.com/AveRides](http://www.facebook.com/AveRides) or call 703-307-7781.

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# MOMS

From page 1

“There’s no magic wand for a picture-perfect balance of pursuing career goals and caring for a family,” says Dr. Ana Garcia-Iguaran of Mater Dei Clinic. “Motherly strength is learning to adapt and finding what works best for you and your family.”

A mother of three, Dr. Garcia-Iguaran says leaving her busy OB-GYN practice in South Florida and relocating to Ave Maria has been the best decision she’s ever made. “I was attracted by the town’s values and the opportunity to make a difference in an area lacking women-specific health services,” she says. She also prioritizes employing young women and working moms who want professional experience in the health care sector.



COURTESY PHOTO

**Dr. Ana Garcia-Iguaran says practicing in Ave Maria is the best decision she has ever made.**

For Patricia Stocton, who with her husband, Phil, owns Meltz ice cream shop in Town Center, moving to Ave Maria “felt like coming home” for the entire family. “We found the warm arms of community and care ready to welcome us when our store opened,” she says.

“Community is a very important thing to be a part of,” Mrs. Stocton adds. “My husband and kids (Nick, 20; Amanda, 19; and Lucy, 10) have made our business a beautiful place for Ave’s youth, college students and families ... We’re so blessed with how life has turned out here.”

Mrs. Stocton has always supported her eldest daughter’s involvement in Meltz. From practicing different dessert-making techniques in the family kitchen to adding new sweets to shop’s menu, she says she believes as a mom she’s meant to encourage her children. “I’m happy to have family who want to be involved and are creative at our shop,” she says.

The first business to establish in Town Center was The Pub & Grill at Ave Maria, owned by Kevin and Krista Joyce, parents to 11 kids. They’ve also added The Bean and Avecado’s, popular destinations for coffee, baked goods, breakfast and more, to their business roster.



COURTESY PHOTO

**Krista Joyce, right, is always a familiar, happy face when The Pub & Grill at Ave Maria sets up a booth at an event in Town Center.**

Mrs. Joyce says most of her work-related duties are with The Bean, although she does have some managerial responsibilities at the pub. “At The Bean, I’ve been able to introduce fun things, including weekend tea parties for women to meet other women,” she says. “I’ve also created a warm setting for college students to have study hangouts by the courtyard fountain.”

She draws a lot of inspiration from her teenage daughters, who help their mom handle the morning rush and have a hand in planning activities at the restaurant. “They’re ‘in-the-know’ more than I am,” she jokes, adding, “It’s always fun to have what’s new and trendy show up on our menu board and in the special events we put on.”

The Joyces are understandably proud of the number of college students they have employed over the years. One young woman who started as a server during her freshman year at Ave Maria University graduated this spring and continues to live in Ave Maria and work in a managerial position at The Pub. “You invest back into the community by hiring people who make the community just that, a community,” Mrs. Joyce says.

Katie Stella is another resident who has experienced the juggling of work and family responsibilities as she pursued her entrepreneurial dream after settling in Ave Maria.

“My greatest support in motherhood has been my faith and other moms who just get it,” says the enterprising owner of Stella Rose

Way, mother of one son and daughter. “Leaving corporate life to be a stay-at-home mom was a huge transition,” she says. “Then, when I decided to own and operate my home décor and gift boutique, I had to redefine how I can and am willing to approach my career.”

Mrs. Stella says “women supporting women” has been a driving force in the success of her shop, and she makes a point to have it serve as a platform for others to have their own cherished successes. “One young AMU student makes one-of-a-kind jewelry pieces that I am happy to sell,” she says. “Creating something that expresses who you are is inspiring to me, so how could I not feature her jewelry in my store?”

Creating opportunities for others to

“Community is a very important thing to be a part of. My husband and kids (Nick, 20; Amanda, 19; and Lucy, 10) have made our business a beautiful place for Ave’s youth, college students and families ... We’re so blessed with how life has turned out here.”

— Patricia Stocton, co-owner of Meltz ice cream shop



“We’ve been blessed with employees who contribute to the same goals we aim for, and I’m grateful for their commitment to every customer. They love Ave Maria like we do, and we know their friendliness and warmth is a large part of what keeps our customers returning.”

— Daneé Williams, co-owner of Oil Well Craft Beer  
and the Secret Ingredient

express their entrepreneurial goals is a selfless act for any business owner — and one that every business owner who can, should do, Mrs. Stella says. “It’s beautiful to work alongside other moms in town who immediately welcomed me, even before I opened my store. My social and professional circles have expanded so much since moving to Ave Maria. I couldn’t be happier for me and my family.”

Daneé Williams and her husband, Matt, own and operate Oil Well Craft Beer and the Secret Ingredient, a busy women’s boutique. Their ventures have been recognized by local publications for being the Best Beer Bar in Collier County and for having the Best Women’s Apparel in the county.

“My philosophy is you can have it all, just not all at once,” Mrs. Williams says. “Matt is my constant source of the inspiration, ideas and go-getting-ness that have made us successful.” The pair have raised three children, with the youngest recently graduating high school.

All the businesswomen of Ave Maria recognize that the benefits of supporting small businesses go way deeper than the town’s economic development. They say it’s about being able to connect with your neighbors and enjoy all-around positive experiences in

their hometown. They also know that entrepreneurs who live where they work know what people in their community want, and they impart that knowledge to each of their employees.

“We’ve been blessed with employees who contribute to the same goals we aim for, and I’m grateful for their commitment to every customer,” Mrs. Williams says. “They love Ave Maria like we do, and we know their friendliness and warmth is a large part of what keeps our customers returning.”

By investing meaningfully in their communities and supporting tradition and innovation among staff, clientele and fellow competitors, small businesses truly are the life support of the U.S. economy, generating close to 50% of the nation’s economic activity and employing two-thirds of the workforce, according to the White House’s Economic Report of the President.

As for the women who own and operate businesses in Ave Maria, their unique contributions are vital assets to the commercial and lifestyle successes enjoyed here, in A Big Kind of Small Town.

“All the businesswomen here want everyone to feel welcome when enjoying our services,” Mrs. Stella says. “We’re happy to know we’re contributing to countless smiles.” 🌻



COURTESY PHOTO  
Daneé Williams is always happy to arrive to work at her boutique in Town Center.



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COURTESY PHOTOS

Outdoor events in the Town Center are guaranteed to draw families for food, fun, games and entertainment — and simply for relaxing in the sun and watching the people go by.

# KIDS

From page 1

and entertainment. Hometown Christmas is the ultimate kid nirvana, bringing pint-sized carnival rides, a parade and Santa Claus to the town.

Come summer, most activities shift to outdoor venues and the water park's robust schedule. The park features slides, splashing buckets, an activity play area, sand and pool volleyball and a toddler pool. With a new aquatics director, Ave Maria is amping up swimming lessons this summer with the goal of building a swim league as children progress.

"The water park is our saving grace during the summer," says resident Jessica Lowden, a mother of three. "We could go every day."

The Lowden family also enjoys bingo nights at Oil Well Craft Beer and regularly attends AMMA's First Friday events that bring face-painting, balloon artists, music and more fun to the Town Center lawn in the cooler months of the year.

"Ave Maria does so many events that are kid-friendly," Mrs. Lowden says.

The AMMA also coordinates occasional field trips for miniature golf, bowling and excursions to nearby wildlife centers like the Kowiachobee Animal Preserve for educational encounters with tigers, bears and gators. Parents provide transportation.

"As lifestyle director, my job is to fill in all the areas and create things for residents to do close to home," says Mrs. DiFlorio. "As the community grows, we will have more options for people to get together and do things right here in the town."

## The scene for teens

Teens are tops in Ave Maria, and several clubs and groups offer programs for this often-hard-to-please age. AMMA's newly formed Teen Council introduced a teens-only version of "The Amazing Race" scavenger hunt and is hosting a June 24 murder mystery dance and planning teen-led story times for children at the waterpark.

The lifestyle director for the neighborhood association in Maple Ridge gives teens their



Older teens enjoy hanging out at events like the inaugural Taste of Ave.



"Teens Got Talent" is a friendly competition in the clubhouse at Maple Ridge.

space, offering skincare and teen-only movie nights ("Back to the Future" was a big hit) and hosting a talent show and even a prom for high schoolers who missed their Covid-canceled dances. It also offers twice-weekly teen dance classes, prompted by the neighborhood's inaugural and wildly popular per-

formance at Hometown Christmas in 2022, where the group performed a flash mob.

Maple Ridge's year-round calendar is filled with activities, events and programs that celebrate major holidays and everyday moments, from Halloween costume parties and Easter egg hunts to just-because milk-and-cookies.

Janice Muenz, aka "Miss Janice," is a familiar face in the neighborhood's clubhouse. A former administrator for Boeing Aircraft whose 43-year career included leading ethics classes and orientations, Ms. Muenz is a reading tutor for children ages 4½ to 14.

"I have a knack for it," she says. "And I will toot my own horn: All in all, the students I've tutored are in the top of their grade. I'm so proud of them."

Ms. Muenz rewards children with pennies (10 for a good lesson) and a happy dance when they master a multisyllabic word. She's tutored in Ave Maria for two years and has a waiting list for her 90-minute sessions.

## Making way for fun and games

Colleen and Jason Phelps, the new owners of Way Out Toys & Games in the Town Center, believe it truly does take a village. With a new arcade double its previous size, including

five pinball machines (a novel concept to the town's youngsters), plus the addition of a TV and a snack table, the Phelps offer a haven for kids to hang out safely while parents run errands in the Town Center.

"A lot of kids ride their bikes here after school, play and hang out until mom wants them back for dinner," Mrs. Phelps says. "We see the store and arcade as a comfortable throwback, like when their parents were kids and had a place where everyone knew them. We want to give kids that feeling of a little bit of freedom and a place of their own."

Way Out Toys & Games also offers the popular Pokémon Pack Wars every Tuesday night. Participants pay \$20 for three packs of cards and compete in lightning-fast rounds with winners determined by the highest-scoring numbers in their decks. Winners receive an assortment of Pokémon prizes. The Phelps also hope to offer birthday party packages, day camp events and parents' nights out, the latter giving parents a few hours for dinner at local restaurants while their kids are entertained at the game store.



Pokémon fans know they can always find fun at Way Out Toys & Games.





Ave Maria Little League fields eight teams and keeps kids starting at age 4 and their parents happy with mornings and afternoons of energy-expending, fresh-air, no-devices fun.

**Play ball!**

Sports and activity-filled camps at Ave Maria also provide plenty of energy-expending options. Mrs. Lowden's 11- and 8-year-old sons, Blake and Brody, have been Little Leaguers for two years. "Baseball gets them out of the house and exercising," she says. "They love it. It's a great chance to meet other kids in the community. For me, it's been a way to meet other parents." The boys' sister, 15-year-old Bailey, often cheers on her brothers and is active in high school drama and chorus.

Ariel Hernandez, an Ave Maria parent and information officer for Ave Maria Little League, says the program has grown considerably since its 2008 charter, now fielding eight teams with Tee-ball programs for ages 4-7, girls' softball for ages 7-12 and baseball for boys ages 7-14. Last year's 9- to 11-year-old boys' team won the spring 2022 District 18 championship.

Mrs. Hernandez says she has witnessed her son's transformation since joining the league. Now 9, he's been playing for 2½ years, has expanded his circle of friends beyond those who attend his school and benefited from the discipline and mental challenges of the game.

"I have Little League to thank for that," says Mrs. Hernandez, who's also happy to have met other parents through baseball. "It's been tremendous for our family. The teams are also

really involved in Hometown Christmas and major parades in the Town Center."

**Dance, camp and Biz Kidz**

For the past 14 years, Karen Ledesma's Ave Maria Dance Academy has shifted to summer camp mode, transforming into Camp Ave Maria, a recreational camp for school-age children 6 to 12. Full- and half-day sessions are limited to 30 kids and start the Monday



COURTESY PHOTOS

Biz Kidz entrepreneur Ella Lymon designs and makes crossbody dog leashes.

after the school year ends.

Notably missing are electronics, smartphones, TVs or movies.

"It's good old-fashioned fun," Mrs. Ledesma says. "We do indoor and outdoor sports and games, Minute to Win It games, bingo, talent shows, relay races, scavenger hunts, arts and crafts. We have a lot of fun! Sometimes I don't know who's having more fun, me or the kids."

For Ave Maria's youngest entrepreneurs, Biz Kidz Expo and Biz Kidz Market give them

the opportunity to learn the fundamentals of business. So far, the programs designed and run by Ave Maria resident JD Ribali have inspired and encouraged kids to make and sell everything from dog leashes and custom jewelry to baked goods and refurbished robotic toys.

"Our goal is to support kids and spark young entrepreneurs to make and sell their products and services," Mr. Ribali says. We even celebrate failures and talk about ways to make something better." 🌟

**How to connect**

- » **Ave Maria Little League:** [www.avemarialittleleague.com](http://www.avemarialittleleague.com)
- » **Ave Maria Master Association;** 239-867-4322, [www.avemariamaster-association.com](http://www.avemariamaster-association.com)
- » **Ave Maria Youth Sports:** Flag football leagues for first through seventh graders and older, 305-409-8838
- » **Biz Kidz:** 239-675-8015, [jd@biz-kids-expo.com](mailto:jd@biz-kids-expo.com)
- » **Camp Ave Maria:** 239-261-2606, [www.campavemaria.com](http://www.campavemaria.com)
- » **Carlos Tirado's Art Classes:** Developed by namesake multimedia Venezuelan artist Carlos Tirado, classes cover crafts, clay and fine

arts and include summer sessions. 954-709-3966, [www.carlostiradosart-classes.com](http://www.carlostiradosart-classes.com)

- » **Los Adolescentes de Ave Maria:** The Ave Maria club for teens rallied to support Collier County residents impacted by Hurricane Ian, delivering meals, hosting a bake sale to raise funds and collecting household cleaning supplies.
- » **Maple Ridge Association:** 239-867-4527, [web.mmilive.net/mapleridge/Home](http://web.mmilive.net/mapleridge/Home)
- » **Miss Janice's Reading Program:** 239-658-5779
- » **Way Out Toys & Games** 239-671-9885 and on Facebook



Ave Maria Dance Academy members perform at many community events and festivals. Here they bust some moves at this year's Blues, Brews & BBQ Festival.





COURTESY PHOTOS

# Dive into summer at the Ave Maria Water Park

BY SANDRA YEYATI

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Few summer pastimes compare to the sunny delights at the Ave Maria Water Park, with fitness and recreational swimming options, super-fun water slides, interactive fountains, a play area for little ones and plenty of seating for resort-style relaxation.

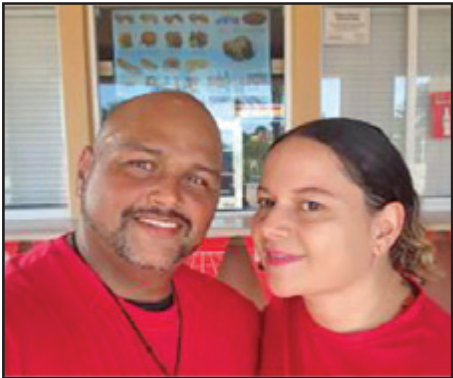
And the beloved outdoor funhouse is upping its game. Serving Latin American delights and traditional park food, the brand-new CJ's Water Park Café is getting rave reviews. Pavilion rentals and food packages from CJ's are now available for birthday bashes or summer parties for up to 50 of your closest friends.

Serving fitness and fun to residents of all ages, the park's summer lineup includes three distinct programs. The new Summer Progressive Swim Team offers instruction by experienced coaches to turn 6- to 16-year-olds into capable, competitive swimmers. For youngsters 12 and under who haven't yet dipped their toes in the water, Red Cross-certified swimming lessons will have them confidently and safely splashing around in just eight lessons. And for adults (13 and over) looking for a great workout, the park's water exercise classes will get them into tip-top shape.

## CJ's Water Park Café

By all accounts, CJ's Water Park Café is a runaway hit. Co-owners Cristina and Juan Rosado have drawn from their Puerto Rican heritage to build a menu brimming with Latin American flair and flavor. Their mainstay is the pastelillos, "little pastries" filled with a choice of seasoned ground beef, marinated chicken breast, mouthwatering melted cheese or sautéed shrimp. For dessert, try the pastelitos, a pastry filled with sweetened guava and cream cheese.

"We add a lot of cultural stuff, such as sofrito, which is the base of all Latin cooking," Mr. Rosado explains. "It's a mixture of peppers, onions, olive oil, cilantro and other Latin spices that you cook the filling in first." The pastelillos, he adds, are always made fresh to order. "We want you to see, hear and smell the food. When it touches your lips,



Juan and Christina Rosado, the owners of CJ's Water Park Café.

it's nice and hot and the flavors attack your tongue. We love our food. We have taken a long time to develop a great recipe, and it is fantastic."

Side dishes at CJ's include sweet plantains, fried green plantains sprinkled with garlic salt, rice and beans, and chicharrones (salted, fried, pork belly). Also on the menu are park favorites including burgers, hot dogs, pizza, breaded chicken strips and French fries, as well as sodas, ice teas, juices, ice cream, icees and other desserts like flan. The café is open 11 a.m.-5 p.m. seven days a week.

The Rosados have added innovations to streamline ordering, such as a separate line to expedite drink orders, plus QR codes and an online interface so people can order from anywhere in the park, instead of standing in line. Curbside takeout orders are also in the works. Check out <https://cjs-pastelillos.square.site> to see the full menu.

## Poolside parties

Throughout the summer, the park's shaded pavilions that can be rented for birthday parties, family reunions and other celebrations. The \$160 cost includes a four-hour pavilion rental plus park admission for 25 guests. Up to 50 guests can be accommodated for additional charges.

While patrons can bring coolers with their own food and non-alcoholic beverages, food

packages can now be pre-ordered from CJ's Water Park Café seven days in advance for gatherings at the park. Packages can be as simple as two pizzas, two liters of sodas and a tower of ice cream cones or can involve more elaborate offerings such as chicken with rice and beans and sweet plantains. Birthday cake options are also available. Call Juan Rosado at 516-782-9093 to customize your food and beverage orders, depending on the number of invited guests, the nature of the party and whether it is primarily for adults or children.

## Summer Progressive Swim Team

For kids ages 6-16 who already know how to swim the front crawl and back stroke, the Summer Progressive Swim Team runs through Aug. 3, making a splash starting at 8 a.m. Monday-Thursday. Three certified coaches will teach the butterfly and breast-stroke as well as underwater turns to develop competition-ready swimmers.

"They'll be doing everything correctly so that they won't injure themselves or be disqualified during a swim meet for doing an illegal kick or an illegal stroke," says Kellie Powell, the park's operations director. "We're training future swim competitors." She hopes that by next season the team will become a USA swimming club, with members going to competitive meets with other clubs and entities like the YMCA. Plus, she adds, the team is a great way for kids to be involved in an outdoor sport and develop self-esteem.

The cost is \$65 per month, and participants need to sign up in person.

## American Red Cross swimming lessons

Last summer, Elizabeth Lavandera brought her son Antonio to the water park for swimming lessons. Just 3 years old at that time, he was afraid of the water, and it took one whole lesson for him to even enter the pool. But after just eight lessons with Ms. Powell, Antonio was triumphantly swimming without wearing any floating devices.

"I believe this is Miss Kellie's calling — to teach kids swimming," Mrs. Lavandera says.

"I thank her every time I see her. We were committed to having Antonio learn to be confident in the water so that if something would ever happen, he would know how to float up and find safety." By the time he was in his second week of lessons, Antonio was able to face his fears, thanks to the trust Ms. Powell had earned.

"I remember telling him, 'You are so brave!' And he looked at me and said, 'Mommy, I can't believe I swim,'" Mrs. Lavandera says.

Now, the duo regularly visits the park to swim together in the big-person's pool.

Through August, swimming lessons are available for water babies (6 months-3 years old), preschoolers (3-5 years) and youth (6-12 year). Classes are led by American Red Cross-certified water safety instructors. The cost is \$65 per student for eight lessons. Weekday morning and weekend classes are available. Families must register in person.

## Fitness laps and water exercise classes

Tommi Black and her husband Richard Allen are in their 70s, and they come to the water park at least five times a week to swim laps and enjoy the sun.

"We love the water park," Ms. Black says. "For 40 cents a day on a quarterly pass, it's the ultimate bargain. The water park is clean, the chairs are always organized, the equipment is always available and there's a great schedule of classes. It's terrific." The couple completes about 30 laps per visit for exercise.

"There's a certain Zen that comes over me when I swim," Ms. Black says. "I find a lot of peace and serenity doing it."

For a full workout, the park offers water exercise classes alternating between cardio and muscle-strengthening routines for Ave Maria residents ages 13 and up. Classes are from 9-10 a.m. Monday-Thursday and also Saturday. All necessary equipment is provided, including resistance gloves, noodles, pool buoys and barbells. The cost is \$65 for 20 classes or \$5 per class.

For more information about any of the Ave Maria Water Park programs, call 239-348-8384. 🌻



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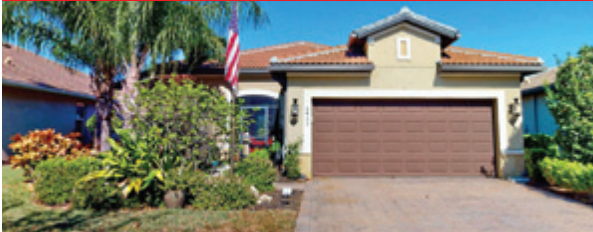
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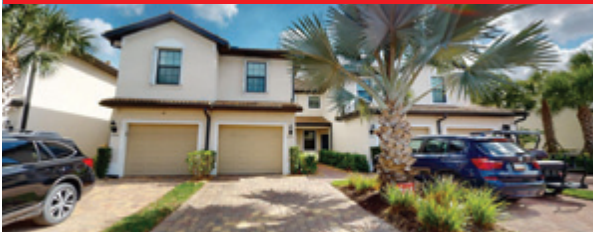
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